STATEMENT OF

DR. DALLAS L. PECK

DIRECTOR, U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BEFORE THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SPACE SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

HEARING ON MAY 6, 1992

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express the views of the Department of the Interior relative to the proposed "Land Remote Sensing Policy Act of 1992". We support S.2297 as implementing the Administration's policy on continuity of data from the Landsat system to support national defense, global change, and other civilian requirements. We hope that the following comments are helpful to your committee as you develop a framework for maintaining our Nation's leadership role in satellite remote sensing of the Earth.

We have been involved in land remote sensing since well before the launch of Landsat-1 in 1972. We played a major role in defining the technical specifications for Landsat 1 (then ERTS-1), and helped to develop an active program of remote-sensing applications and research throughout the Federal government. Through our EROS Data Center in South Dakota, we worked with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) until 1983 to distribute Landsat data to all users. Since 1983 we have cooperated with the Department

of Commerce's (DOC) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Earth Observation Satellite (EOSAT) Company to assist in product generation and data distribution and to maintain the Landsat archive. The archive currently contains almost 1 million scenes of Landsat data.

Over the life of the Landsat program, we have made many contributions to improve Landsat data processing, image enhancement, and distribution system capabilities. We are currently developing the Global Land Information System (GLIS), an on-line inquiry system to provide global change researchers and others with information about land-related global change data, including Landsat data.

We are also a user of Landsat data for scientific and research purposes. We have encouraged and promoted the use of Landsat and other remotely sensed data by cooperating with other Federal agencies such as NASA, NOAA, the Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of Agriculture, and the Agency for International Development. We were an active participant in support of Desert Shield and Desert Storm, producing unique and special-purpose image products from Landsat data.

We are also participating in the development of NASA's Earth Observing System Data and Information System (EOSDIS). The USGS EROS Data Center will serve as the processing, distribution, and archive facility for providing land-related data and information to the global change research community.

S. 2297 provides for: (1) continuation of the Landsat program to meet the needs of national defense, global change, and other civilian uses, (2) government funding and management to assure that these needs are met, (3) availability of low cost data with adequate coverage to support national security, global change and research needs, (4) provision of data to the archive, and (5) appropriate commercial involvement and partnerships.

Specifically, S. 2297 provides for joint funding and management of the Landsat program by NASA and DOD. This approach combines the management and technological competence of both agencies to ensure the comprehensive long-term acquisition of Landsat data. We have worked closely with both agencies in the past, and are confident that we will continue to have an effective working relationship on the future Landsat efforts.

With respect to the issue of data availability, it is especially important that Landsat data be routinely acquired around the world to provide the necessary repetitive coverage of the Earth's land areas. By the time of the launch of the first EOS platform at the end of this decade, the Landsat program will have collected data that document land surface conditions for a period of over 25 years.

S. 2297 requires data to be distributed at the "marginal cost of filling a specific user request." The issue of data pricing is complex, and we believe this policy should be consistent with policies applied to other federally provided data. Accordingly, we prefer that the legislation not provide a

specific data pricing policy. The data approach outlined by my NASA colleague reflects our preferred mechanism for dealing with this issue. This will help those who had been effectively excluded from using Landsat data because of rising data costs during the past few years, and should encourage others to use the data for important applications to earth science research, environmental monitoring, and global change studies. With the government's promise of program continuity, wide access to low-cost data should allow many organizations to make a substantial commitment to use Landsat data.

The legislation requires that the Department of the Interior shall continue the maintenance of the Landsat data archive and ensure that all new Landsat data are archived for future use. We are very comfortable with such a role.

We favor appropriate involvement of the commercial sector to increase the usefulness of the data. By offering minimally processed unenhanced data to the public, value-added services can be provided by the commercial sector to satisfy the information needs of their customers. This may lead to significantly enhanced commercial market development and demand for Landsat-type data.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to make these comments about the future of the Landsat program on behalf of the Department of the Interior. We will continue to work with Congress, NASA, DOD, and the private sector to see that the Landsat program is continued in a way that optimizes benefits to the nation and provides a framework for long-term program continuity.